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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CONTINUATION OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

Note by the Secretary-General

I. BACKGROUND

1. In its resolution 46/96 of 16 December 1991, the General Assembly requested, inter alia, the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1992 to give its views on the continuation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, with new terms of reference, in response to resolution 45/91 of 14 December 1990, and to submit its recommendations to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

2. The present note of the Secretary-General is prepared to ensure that the Economic and Social Council has the most relevant information when it considers the issue. The note will then be transmitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, along with the views of the Council on the subject.

3. The General Assembly, in resolution 45/91, requested the Secretary-General to shift the focus of the United Nations programme on disability from awareness-raising to action, with the aim of achieving a society for all by the year 2010, and stressed the need for priority to be given to action-oriented programmes and sustained commitment by Member States to the implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade and to ensure thereby the continued improvement of the situation of disabled persons.

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* A/47/50.

4. The Voluntary Fund, originally entitled the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons, was established by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/133 of 16 December 1977.

5. By its resolution 40/31 of 29 November 1985 the General Assembly endorsed the terms of reference of the Trust Fund proposed by the Secretary-General (see A/40/728 and Corr.1) to further the achievement of the goals of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/37/35/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex) of full participation and equalization of opportunities of disabled persons, and decided that the Trust Fund should henceforth be called the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. By the same resolution the Assembly reaffirmed that the resources of the Voluntary Fund should be used to support the implementation of the objectives of the World Programme of Action within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), with priority given, as appropriate, to programmes and projects of least developed countries.

II. PERFORMANCE OF THE FUND

6. Since becoming operational in 1980 through to the end of 1991, the Fund provided a total of nearly US$ 3 million in seed-money grants to 161 disability-related projects, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Western Asia and Latin America and the Carribean. Global or regional projects accounted for 30 per cent of the total number of projects supported and 37 per cent of the total funds distributed (see table).

Table. Projects supported and grants disbursed by region, January 1980-December 1991

Regions	Number of projects	Per-centage	Value of grants (United States dollars)	Per-centage
Africa	45	28	1 075 281	37
Asia and the Pacific	36	22	476 922	16
Europe	1	0.6	1 440	0.05
Latin America and the Caribbean	15	9	129 300	4
Western Asia	16	10	294 413	10
Interregional/global	48	30	955 154	33
Total	161		2 932 510	

7. National capacity-building and institutional development were the main focus of the Fund-assisted activities. Training activities supported by the Fund accounted for 38 per cent of the total resources; technical exchange and knowledge (20 per cent); support to disabled persons' own organizations (19 per cent); data collection and applied research (13 per cent); and promotional activities (7.45 per cent).

8. Sources of finance were primarily the contributions of 44 Member States, as well as small non-governmental organization and private sector contributions. Co-financing arrangements with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) assisted 19 projects.

9. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Fund supported catalytic and innovative projects in the disability field, by providing seed money to small-scale disability-specific income-generating projects; by supporting networks of disabled persons' own organizations and encouraging South-South cooperation; by promoting awareness-raising activities and by reinforcing disability concerns within wider development programmes. The Fund has filled a specific and otherwise neglected niche by directly targeting disability issues and supporting small-scale projects. It has also enhanced cooperation between and within the non-governmental community by providing an opportunity for their direct involvement.

III. CONTINUATION OF THE FUND

10. The Secretary-General is of the view that the Voluntary Fund has contributed significantly to the work of the United Nations in the disability field, directly benefitting grassroot-level initiatives, and that it should continue in the period beyond the Decade, henceforth called the United Nations Fund on Disability in order to reach the international community's target, endorsed by resolution 45/91, of a society for all by the year 2010. In this context the Secretary-General suggests the following Terms of Reference of the Fund for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council:

Proposed terms of reference

The resources of the Fund shall be used to strengthen technical cooperation activites in the disability field between developed and developing countries, and between developing countries, through the co-financing of field-based technical cooperation activities related to integrated policies, strategies and programmes within the framework of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, with special emphasis on least developed countries and on especially disadvantaged groups, for example, disabled women, elderly disabled persons, the hearing-impaired, mentally disabled persons and persons with multiple disabilities.

Specific activities eligible for funding shall include:

(a) The strengthening and improving of national capacities for:

(i) The attainment of the rights of disabled persons and the integration of disability aspects into national planning;

(ii) Training and advisory services on disability prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities;

(b) Human resources development of disabled persons and the initiation of employment-generating activities with the aim of encouraging the independance of disabled persons within their communities;

(c) The establishment and strengthening of organizations of disabled persons;

(d) The development and dissemination of appropriate disability-related technologies and know-how;

(e) Data collection, applied research and evaluation of integrated disability policies, strategies and programmes;

(f) Training for establishing and strengthening national coordinating committees or similar bodies.